

Genesis 1-3 - God of Creation

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[0 : 00] So Colossians chapter 1 verse 15 to 21 says this. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

! For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.

All things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

[1 : 17] Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.

Amen. Thank you, Yvonne. I put a typo on the front of there. So you've got an extra verse from Colossians chapter 1, which I had not originally intended.

But thank you, Yvonne, for following what I wrote on the notice sheet. That's my fault entirely. I feel like we should read verse 22. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you wholly in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

Let's pray and ask for the Lord's help as we come to his word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we want to pray and ask for your help this morning.

Lord, we're conscious of our own weakness, the weakness of our minds, of our concentration levels, of my speaking abilities.

[2 : 21] Lord, we don't trust in ourselves. We trust in you. Be gracious to us by your spirit and speak to us through your word this morning, we pray. Help us, we ask, to leave with a deep sense of your glory and your wonder as we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Sometimes in my idle moments, I don't know whether you do this, but I imagine time traveling. Anyone ever ponder the wonders of time travel and where you might go and who you might see?

One of the scenarios that runs through in my mind as I imagine time traveling is going back in time and planting in the hands of people stuff that they don't really understand what it is.

Do you know what I mean? You know, say, putting a Roman soldier in a Tesla, for example. What would he make of it? What is it? And the wonder of AI is now that I can show you a picture of these wonderful things that come into my mind.

What about the idea of giving a Victorian an iPhone? What would they make of that? Yeah. Yeah. As I kind of ponder these things in my head, eventually the practical part of my brain takes over, which it often does.

[3 : 34] And then I go, you know what? You couldn't only give them an iPhone, could you? You'd also have to take the whole mobile phone network with you and the Internet. Otherwise, really, the phone would just be a dead thing in their hand.

And, you know, if you were to take a Tesla to a Roman soldier, you'd also have to take a charging station. It's hard enough to find one of those in the 21st century. So never mind finding one all that long time ago.

But if you put those sort of practical concerns to one side, there are some other practical concerns with time travel, it has to be said. But if you put those aside for one moment, think, why is it that an iPhone would be so overwhelming to a Victorian or a Tesla to a Roman soldier?

Well, really, it's not, I don't think, just because of its capabilities, you know, that an iPhone solves a whole set of problems that a Victorian doesn't really have. But really, it's because they don't understand where that has come from.

They don't know the story of its development. They don't know who created it or why it was created. They don't know for whom it was made. You know, the point is this, really.

[4 : 43] If you're going to understand the purpose of something, you have to also know where it's come from, who made it, what they made it for.

And what I want us to see over the next few weeks in a much more profound way is that the same is true for our lives. I think that it is probably fair to say that many people in our world, maybe some of us here this morning, live our lives rather like a Victorian holding an iPhone or a Roman soldier driving a Tesla.

Life for us is very, very confusing because we have basically no idea why we're here, who made us, what we're for. The Victorians missed out on the launch of the iPhone, didn't they, in 2007?

And we've missed out on the launch of our lives. Where are they from? What are they for? You know, and we see that we're capable of some amazing things, don't you? We can love people.

We can show kindness. We can heal. We can build. We can learn. We can grow. We're capable of making art and music. We can tell stories that move us.

[5 : 51] We can even make and operate Teslas and iPhones. But if we don't understand our origins, life is not just only terribly confusing, but also those brilliant things become meaningless.

Because without knowing our origins, we don't know our purpose. Now, of course, you don't have to be a Christian to realize that, do you? Anyone, regardless of their religion or their creed, is obsessed with origin stories.

In the search for meaning and purpose, everyone always has to go back to an origin story, don't they? It's why when you read a non-Christian book, a secular book on how to deal with anxiety or loneliness, it will tell you stories about how your ancient ancestors lived in tight communities to care for one another.

You read a management book, desperately trying to work out how to look after the people who work with you, and they will tell you about how we survived or we lived in caves. Or you watch the Blue Planet or Life of Mammals, whatever it is.

And they take you back to some sort of speculative origin story. Because even without the origin story, even the beauty of what you see is sort of robbed of purpose and meaning.

[6 : 59] But the problem is with all those origin stories, it's essentially they're speculative, aren't they? They are best guesses. Because we weren't there, and so we don't know. We're just guessing.

Like a Roman soldier in a Tesla wondering, I wonder what this button does. Now, of course, when you come to the Bible, it's very different to that, isn't it? The Bible starts with an origin story, but it is unique and different because it is told by the one who was there.

God himself. God himself. And my plan over four weeks over the summer is to give you four sermons on Genesis 1 to 3. And trying not so much to work through the chapters verse by verse, which is what we often do here.

But rather to come up with and show you sort of four grand origin themes that come from Genesis 1 to 3. So that we can, by seeing those together, discover the purpose of our lives.

Now, these aren't exhaustive. Really, Genesis 1 to 3 teach lots and lots of things that we need to know. But these four themes, I think, are foundational for us.

[8 : 05] So I want us this week to consider the God of creation. Who is it that makes us? What is he like? What can we know about him? What can we see from the act of creation?

Why is that important? In week two, we're going to think about the world that God makes. What is this world? Where does it come from? How does God make it?

What does that mean for the purpose of creation? How we're to care for it? In week three, we're going to think about the people that God has made. Us, humanity. What does it mean to be human? We're told in Genesis that we are made in the image of God. What does that mean? What is that supposed to look like in our lives? And finally, we're going to consider the corruption of creation. What's gone wrong? What? We all know that we live in a broken world. Why did that happen? How did it happen? And what does that mean for life now? And so this morning, we're going to start off by thinking about the God of creation.

[9 : 06] And really, we're not really going to get past, really, the first three verses of Genesis chapter one. So turn to Genesis chapter one, if you're not yet there in a Bible, page three in your Bibles.

And I want to try and start for you with a sentence summary of everything that I'm going to say. I think sometimes sermons where you're not just working verse by verse can be confusing, can't they?

You can easily get lost. So what I'm going to do is tell you right from the beginning what I'm going to tell you. And then we're going to unpack it and work through it. So here's a sentence summary of what Genesis one to three teach us about the God of creation.

We find this, the God of creation is an eternal and Trinitarian God who makes everything from nothing for his glory.

Now, every word in that sentence is important. We're going to try and unpack it together. The God of creation is an eternal Trinitarian God who makes everything from nothing for his glory.

[10 : 07] So let's start with the eternal God. Genesis chapter one, verse one, in the beginning, God, in the beginning, God.

In other words, Genesis one is the story of the creation of the universe. It is not the story of the creation of God himself, because God was already there in the beginning.

God, the God of the Bible is the one who did not need to be made, the one who has no beginning and has no end. He is without origin. Now, I know that's all really obvious, isn't it?

But let me try and show you how foundational and significant that is. God here is eternal, right? So it's not so much that before Genesis chapter one, verse one, he has been sitting around on a sofa with nothing to do for endless years and years and years, and then decided, well, I'm going to make the universe, right?

He's not like a teenager on summer vacation, bored in eternity, thinking, well, what am I going to do with these endless weeks that are expanding in front of me? Oh, let me draw a picture, right?

[11 : 19] No, that's not what he's doing. That's not what he's deciding. Rather, God in Genesis one exists before time itself. God is the origin of time in Genesis one, existing not so much in an eternal sequence of moments, but in eternity before moments themselves existed.

Now, I know this very quickly gets confusing. Eternity is not something that we can get our heads around. But without this foundation stone, it's fair to say that nothing about our existence will make any sense at all. You might be one of those people who says, or has said, or has friends who say, listen, science disproves the existence of God.

I don't believe in God. I believe in science. Now, people used to say that a lot. I don't think people say it quite as much, because it is actually nonsense, isn't it? Because you know, don't you, that science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God.

Because by definition, Genesis chapter one, verse one, God existed before anything that you could put in a test tube could be there. So you can't prove or disprove the existence of God, because God is the one who has always existed outside of this creation, not of this time.

He is other than this creation. He is eternal. He was before. Now, perhaps you're not a Christian this morning, or you're just not really sure.

[12 : 44] Perhaps you maybe don't even think it's very important. You just get on with things. Don't think about it that much. Well, here's the thing. Everything that you just get on with, right?

Everything that you experience in this life, everything that you enjoy, it comes from somewhere.

What you can see necessarily has been made by someone or something that you can't see that is not part of this creation itself. And that someone is, says Genesis chapter one, verse one, the God of the Bible.

It's not just Genesis chapter one that tells you that. We're told in the New Testament, this God, despite existing outside of creation, outside of time, puts on flesh.

He's born in history. That you and I might know him, because it is impossible for us to know things outside of the material universe and outside of time.

He puts on flesh and comes and born in history, so that we must not live our lives in ignorance of him, because he has not given us that option. Because he has come into creation that we might know him.

[13 : 51] Not that we might discover him by science, but that we might discover him by revelation. He has revealed himself. But God is not just eternal, is he? We also find in this passage that he is

Trinitarian.

By that I mean that God is Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons. Look with me carefully at verse one and two.

It's clear that this is the origin of the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God creates matter in the universe.

But verse two, that creation is itself formless and empty. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.

Now we're going to come and think about this a lot in coming weeks. But the pattern of Genesis one is that this formless and empty heavens and earth that's created by God in verse one, is then formed in verses three to 13 and filled in verses 14 to 31.

[14:55] In other words, God is not just the source of the creation. He doesn't just create matter and set it in motion and then retreat. No, he is the source, the sustainer, the designer.

He is intimately involved in all that he has made. And he doesn't do that, we notice, as a singular reality. But as he is, the triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

So look at verse two. It's the Spirit of God, you're told, who is hovering over the waters that he has made. Literally, the Spirit is brooding over the waters. In Deuteronomy 32, it's used of an eagle circling over its young, brooding over them.

And then in verse three, God speaks, and God said, so that the eternal God who makes the decision to create and is the origin of all things in verse one is also the Spirit of verse two and the Word of verse three.

Now, of course, you see it more clearly as you read the rest of the Bible. If you like the rest of the Bible, and this is someone else's illustration, but I'm going to borrow it for a moment, in someone else's illustration, the idea is that the New Testament puts the lights on so that you can see what's really there in the Old Testament, but you can't see it so clearly without the light.

[16:03] And now when the New Testament puts the lights on, you see John chapter one, verse one, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. This is Jesus, God the Son, in creation. So in Genesis chapter one, there are three distinct persons working together in one creation task, in the economy of their persons, each playing a part, but all achieving the same end.

As the world is formed and filled in accordance with the plan of the Father, through the Word of the Son, in the power of the Spirit. Now, I know, some of you are loving this, because you love being up in the clouds, thinking these kind of great thoughts, right?

Others of you are like, oh my goodness, Steve, will you say something that I understand? Right, let me try and land this with an illustration to try and give you the significance of what's going on. I don't know whether this happens in your flat or your home, but normally if you go into the kitchen, you can tell who's been there by what's left behind, right?

I would imagine in this kitchen, it's probably a teenager. But, you know, you can see, can't you? You can go in and go, okay, I know who's been here because this is the sort of thing that they create, right?

[17:18] This is the sort of mess that they make when they're cooking. Or maybe you have a flatmate who's a brilliant cook, or they bake cakes, and you walk into the kitchen, you can smell them, and you go, oh yeah, they've been here, I can see it. Their fingerprints are all over what has been made.

Now, that's what's going on in Genesis chapter one. You know, you don't have the clearest explanation of the Trinity in Genesis chapter one. It becomes clear as you read the rest of the Bible. But the fingerprints of a triune God are all over everything that he has made. You know, think about what's going on here. This is unity and diversity, isn't it? This is one God, but in three persons. Not dividing the work into three parts and each doing it, but all working together, distinct from one another, but unified in purpose. And that's our world, isn't it?

Our world is so diverse. There's so many different things going on, right? You know that, don't you, if you studied geography or biology or something. This is so complicated. There's such a diversity of things going on in our world, but it's united and it works together.

[18 : 22] Why is that? It's the fingerprints of the God who made it. What about marriage? What about the unity of a man and a woman, different to one another?

This is why the Bible's definition of marriage is a man and a woman. It's because they are different to one another and yet united together. It is an image of who God is and what God is like.

The Trinitarian God makes total sense of what we discover in the world. We see this unity and diversity all the time. And let me tell you, there's a really important sense in which evolution can never explain that to you.

Neither can Islam, because there's no Trinity. And the Trinitarian God's fingerprints are over all that we see and experience. Let me try and put it this way. If I said before, what you can see implies someone or something that you can't see that made it or from which it comes.

If you can say that, now you can say even more clearly that what we can see implies not just any God, but it implies the Christian God, Father, Son, Spirit.

[19 : 28] A God who plans, a God who speaks, powerfully makes, a God who is implied in all that he's made, a God who we can know ultimately through Jesus Christ.

As incredibly, in the plan of the Father, in the word of the Son, in the power of the Spirit, he not only makes you, but can save you also.

Now, let's return to our sentence for a moment. The God of creation is an eternal Trinitarian God who makes everything from nothing for his glory.

Let's think about making everything from nothing. Now, we've covered some of this already. We saw that God eternally existed before anything that he meant. God was when nothing else was, right?

Before time, before matter. But here the point is that God doesn't create by taking stuff that already exists and molding it into something. That's how you and I make things, isn't it?

[20 : 27] But God instead speaks and then what didn't exist starts to exist. God makes from nothing by speaking.

Now, we're going to return to this idea next week, but notice that the glory of God in Genesis 1 is not so much about the speed with which he creates. It's not that God is amazing because he takes six days and not a billion years.

Really, it seems that the days in Genesis 1 are about the structure and the beauty of what God has made. The glory of creation is that God makes the world from nothing by speaking.

In Jeremiah chapter 10, God is comparing himself to the idols of the nations that Israel have become so obsessed with. They've kind of been dragged away to follow the idolatry of the nations around them.

And his comparison is not, hey, listen, the God of the Bible, the God of Israel, he's the real God because he's like much faster than these idols. No, his comparison is that these idols are made from the stuff of this world, whereas God makes this world from nothing just by his wisdom.

[21 : 36] It says this, Jeremiah chapter 10, verse 12, but God made the earth by his power. He founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. Now, theologians call this by the Latin name.

God creates ex nihilo. It's from nothing, out of nothing. And this sets God apart. You and I create, as we mentioned, from the things around us. You know, I give you some Play-Doh.

You can make a snowman. Some of you might be able to make something more complicated than a snowman. Others of us, that would be the peak of our creative ability. But God does not need the Play-Doh in order to make the snowman.

He can call it into existence by speaking. Romans chapter 4, verse 17 says, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 3 is exactly the same. By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

[22 : 40] God spoke it into existence. That the verb used in Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 for create is the Hebrew verb bara, which implies making from nothing, right?

That verb is never used in the Bible for anyone other than God himself because God alone is the God who can do this. And this is hugely significant.

You know, you and I don't come from a sort of eternal gloom that's been swirling around for eternity that God decided to take his hands on and kind of form into something, existing for no reason with no origin.

No, we exist because God called us into existence. He spoke us into existence. What was not came to be.

Now, we'll think some more about the how and the days and all that sort of stuff in the weeks to come. But right now, this is the point. You and I are here because God said we would be here. But let me just show you one more thing about this because this is really profound and significant.

[23 : 43] And I want you to turn with me to Psalm 51. It's not on the screen, so you're going to have to turn to it. It's page 573 in your church Bibles. It's 573, Psalm 51.

Now, Psalm 51, you might know. If you know a Bible, you will know this. It doesn't matter if you don't know it. But Psalm 51 is the psalm that David writes after he's committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Bathsheba was married to Uriah. Uriah was fighting in the army. David saw her. He took her. He slept with her. She got pregnant. He murdered her husband.

And then he is confronted by the prophet Nathan, and he repents, and he writes Psalm 51. And he's exposed. He calls out for God's forgiveness.

But listen to how he prays. Pick it up in verse 7. You know that sense, don't you, of the sin in our lives.

[24 : 50] The things that we've done wrong give a sense of dirtiness. We need to be washed clean. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

You see that sort of sense, can't you, that he's weighed down by his sin. What he's done wrong is weighing on him and crushing him. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. He knows that the problem with his sin is not just a problem between him personally, but between him and God.

It's the fact that God sees his sin that causes him trouble. And then he says, verse 10, Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do you not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. And there in verse 10, David is using that verb, bara, again.

The Genesis 1 verse 1 verb. Create in me a pure heart, O God. What he's saying to God is not there is something in me, God, that you can mold into a heart that loves you.

[25 : 58] He's saying the opposite of that, isn't he? He's saying, as I look inside myself, I see, God, that there is nothing in me worthy of loving you and trusting you and living for your glory.

If I'm going to do that, God, you need to create in me something that doesn't yet exist. Speak into existence a pure heart that loves you.

Listen, if you're not a Christian this morning, the wonderful story is that you have been made by God. But the brilliant news is that you can be remade by him through the Lord Jesus.

Create in me a new heart because there is nothing in us as we were weighed down by our sin.

There is nothing in us that God can take and mold into something worthy of himself. He needs to start again.

Please do a Genesis 1-1 miracle in my heart is what David is praying. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

[27 : 01] The old is gone. The new is here. All this is from God. That's what we need, isn't it? God creates from nothing. Finally, for his glory.

For his glory. This is why God makes all that he makes. See, it's obvious, I hope, from Genesis 1-1, you can come back there if you're still in Psalm 51, you can see, hopefully, that God isn't compelled to make the world, right?

He is not compelled to create the universe. There is no external force forcing God to make and create the universe because there is nothing other than him in the beginning, right?

He is there alone in eternity, in the beginning, in the person of Father, Son, and Spirit. And in his freedom in eternity, God chooses to make the world.

Why? Well, because God in himself is the creator. This is who God is. God is the God who makes.

[28 : 04] He is a creator God. How do you know that the God of the universe is a creator God?

Well, because he creates and because we're here. He has made you and me.

And so everything that is made shows the glory of the creator. It's its reason for being. We are here because our universe is ruled and made by a creator God.

That's why we're here. That's why our world is here. So the mountains of Switzerland, the lakes of Italy, the seas and the coast of Greece, are here because the glorious creator said they would be. You might make a painting or create a piece of music or build a house or paint a wall or write a story or cook a meal. And everyone thinks, oh, that's amazing. I've never tasted anything like this. This is incredible. You are a great chef. You're a glorious chef. I've never heard music like this. You are a wonderful musician. You're fantastic.

[29 : 06] In the same way, on a totally different scale, everything that we experience in this world and enjoy in this world comes from this God in his glory.

And you see it, don't you? And you know that God made this from nothing, by speaking, unparalleled glory and greatness. There is no God like this God.

There is no one like this one. The one who in eternity makes the decision to create the world, a decision that brings into existence all that we can see and the heavenly realities that we cannot see. All from a God who did not need to make it but is independent from his creation but revealed by it so that we can say the God who makes the world is an eternal Trinitarian God who makes everything from nothing for his glory.

Now in each of these four weeks I want to finish with a big application point. What is the point of this? What is it that flows from this?

[30 : 12] And here's the question for us. If God is like this, if this sentence summarizes who God is as he makes the world, what difference does that make to you and me? What does that mean about the purpose of our lives?

Well let me say it means that you and I are made for the purpose of worship. That's what we're made for. Literally your life, my life has been given to me to show the worth, value, glory and greatness of God.

Praise God. If you are living your life for something else, if you think your life is about making you look great, if you think your life is about making your kids look great, if you think your life is about acquiring things, you will find your life deeply confusing and dissatisfying and ultimately it will break you because you were made to worship.

Now that creation instinct to worship is so deep in you and I that if we do not worship the God who made us we will try worshipping anything.

Right? We've got a flat where our daughter lives which is in there. You can hear QPR. Right? And they were playing yesterday.

[31 : 38] They scored twice yesterday which is like a remarkable achievement. and you can hear them rejoicing, worshipping the glory of their players.

Right? What is it? I mean, there's nothing wrong in enjoying football, is there? Probably. Right? But for many people it's a substitute, isn't it?

We are made to worship. There's something empty and hollow about our lives if we're not giving glory to someone or something. And that is why you are made to worship this God.

And if you're not worshipping this God, the one for whom you were made, it will break you. And worship doesn't mean attend a church and sing a few songs on a Sunday, does it? I mean, it doesn't mean less than that but it means a whole lot more, doesn't it?

It means that the point of all of our lives is to glorify God. Everything that we do, whether that's at work or at home. You have nothing in your life that you didn't receive from the hand of God.

[32 : 35] We have no greatness that hasn't come to us as a gift from Him. You have no ability that doesn't ultimately belong to Him. You owe everything to Him. All things are from Him and to Him and for Him and to bring Him glory.

And the extent to which you find your purpose and your joy in that is the extent to which you will enjoy life and find it meaningful and hopeful. Let me pray and then we'll sing together.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have revealed yourself to us that we don't have to guess where we came from or for what purpose we were made because you have told us in your word that you are the creator of all things eternally, Father, Son, and Spirit, making from nothing by speaking for your glory.

we pray that we might find our purpose, our meaning in worshipping you and we recognise like King David that we are incapable of that worship on our own.

So create in us new hearts, we pray, that love you, that praise you and worship you and live all of their days for your glory and not their own.

[34 : 10] as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.